

~Green River Wildlife Supervisor Retires After 35 years of Service ~



DeCecco teaches proper firearms handling in a hunter education class (left) and qualifies with his service firearm at the range in Rock Springs.



“For decades, I have visited with retiring and or retired Game and Fish employees and they all said their career highlights were the people they got to meet and work with and the many wildlife experiences. Those are the things I, too, will really miss.”

DeCecco grew up in Pennsylvania where he developed a love for the outdoors and was always “collecting and raising critters”. “I was very much into being a Boy Scout and fishing, so it was an easy transition to study natural science at the community college near my home,” DeCecco said. “I transferred to the University of Wyoming in 1977 and completed my Bachelor’s of Science in Wildlife Management in 1980. I fell in love with Wyoming and the western lifestyle and took my first Game and Fish job at the Sybille Wildlife Research Center as a laborer in 1979.”

After graduating from the University of Wyoming, DeCecco began his career with the Game and Fish in September of 1980 as a temporary biologist aid working in the department’s Biological Services. There he maintained the wildlife observation system, big game distribution maps, and provided other support. In March of 1982 he became a warden trainee in Lander and Alcova, with most of his time spent on watercraft enforcement. In September of 1982, DeCecco was appointed Cheyenne District Game Warden and completed the mandatory Peace Officer Training at Wyoming Law Enforcement Academy in 1983.

“I really enjoyed my stint as the Cheyenne District Game Warden,” DeCecco said. “The district was always so busy and diverse that I was able to experience some awesome wildlife work. I was fortunate to work with the swift fox live capture and reintroduction from Laramie to Saskatchewan and Alberta, Canada, sharp-tailed grouse research, urban wildlife control, working on Warren Air Force Base with the pronghorn antelope captures, numerous wildlife immobilizations, and some very interesting law enforcement investigations. I even had a live radio call-in show that was a lot of fun. It truly was a pleasure building relationships with landowners and the various public constituents.”

Those relationships persist nearly 20 years later, with Cheyenne personnel often being asked by Laramie County residents: “How’s that Steve DeCecco doing these days?”

DeCecco married Peggy Temte in 1983 and they have three children, Cara, Dena, and Daniel, and one grandchild, Darcy Ann.

DeCecco promoted and transferred to Green River in 1997 and began his career as the Green River Wildlife Supervisor. “My focus has always been promoting professionalism and service to our constituents in southwest Wyoming,” DeCecco said. “Southwest Wyoming is such a diverse region of desert, prairie, and mountains. I have really enjoyed my 19 years here; the challenges of interacting with federal land agencies and private landowners and striving to maintain a commitment to effective and responsive wildlife management, law enforcement, and public service. I have seen many new game wardens begin their careers under me and a great deal of employee turnover, but I am very proud of the equality of employees we have always had.”

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DeCecco presents hunting regulations at a Green River public meeting.



DeCecco presents GR Wildlife Management Coordinator Mark Zornes with a service award.

“Steve's service to the agency is reflective of a tremendous passion for wildlife combined with a true recognition of the importance of the public's role in protecting and managing it,” said Game and Fish Chief Game Warden Brian Nesvik. “Steve led by example with his field presence. He always made it a priority to spend the busiest parts of hunting seasons in the field with his employees and sportsmen. He made team work an extremely high priority. He set a very positive example by always being there for his neighbors and exemplified the Golden Rule. Steve will certainly be missed by both the public and the Game and Fish Team. He proudly served our agency for over three decades and did it with the passion and steadfast focus on professionalism that our constituents expect.”

“You know, after 36 years there has been a lot of change, like equipment, technology, duties, issues and the level of public discourse, polarization, and a move towards species focus of sportsmen,” DeCecco said. “There were no cell phones or computers when I began my career! And then, there are many things that never changed for me; my core principles, Game and Fish heritage and history, my personal drive and commitment and the challenges I faced. Wyoming... it's been a great ride,” DeCecco said. “I am looking forward to new experiences and spending more time with family and friends in retirement,” DeCecco said. “We will continue to enjoy Wyoming and catching up on some hunting and fishing.”

Enforcement Happenings

There are unsolved poaching cases in the Green River Region. If you have any information about any wildlife violation please contact your local game warden or the STOP Poaching Hotline at:

1-877-WGFD-TIP (1-877-943-3847)

- You can also report a wildlife violation at the WGFD website

<http://wgfd.wyo.gov>



~Welcome Todd Graham, new Green River Wildlife Supervisor~ Black Bear Season Wraps Up



Photo: WGFD Mark Gocke
G&F Commissioner Carrie Little (left), Todd Graham, and G&F Director Scott Talbott (right) Graham receiving his 25 year service award and the Shikar-Safari Club International award. Welcome to Green River!

Former Afton Game Warden Todd Graham moved on over from Star valley to become the new Green River Wildlife Supervisor. Graham is no stranger to the Green River Region; he worked as the game warden in Mountain View in the early 1990's. Graham has worked for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department for 25 years. Recently, Graham was awarded the 2015 Wildlife *Officer of the Year from the Shikar-Safari Club International* for his outstanding performance and achievements. The award is given annually in every state and Canadian Province. *More to come about Graham in the August Green River Newsletter so stay tuned!*

Mountain Game Warden Allen Deru checked the black bear from this happy black bear hunter in hunt area 10. (photo: below, left) Green River Wildlife Biologist Patrick Burke processes a black bear. (photo: below, right) Black bear hunters are required to report a black bear harvest within 72 hours. Biologists take DNA samples and pull a tooth for aging the bear. The fall black bear hunting season will open up for archery on August 15 in hunt area 11 and September 1 in hunt areas 9, 10, and 12.



~Kayaking~ Collaring Deer Fawns~ Moving Cattle~



Kemmerer Game Warden Chris Baird and Evanston Game Warden Nick Roberts spent a day checking anglers on the Ham's Fork from a kayak. Both Wardens tipped their kayaks and went for a brief cold swim. Multiple moose were observed and no fishing violations were detected. *(photo: left)*

Warden Nick Roberts and Cokeville Game Warden Neil Hymas spent several days assisting with deer fawn captures with the UW co-op unit. Collars were placed on fawns to monitor survival and movement. (*photo: center, left*)

Warden Roberts spent a few days moving cattle with the owners of the Belle Butte Grazing Association. The ***Bear River Divide Hunter Management Area*** is comprised of a checkerboard land pattern with the private sections belonging to the Belle Butte Grazing Association. While nearly half of the Bear River Divide HMA is comprised of State and BLM property, only 0.5% of the 200,000+ acres would be legally accessible without the permission of the Grazing Association. (*photo: below, left*)

Wardens from the Green River and Lander Regions spent several days at Seminole Reservoir participating in firearms and custody and control training. Wardens were put through multiple simulated scenarios that they may come in contact with in the field. They also practiced handgun, rifle, and shotgun marksmanship. *(photo: below)*



~Watercraft Safety~ ~Hunter Education at Camp Roberts~ Welcome New Hunter ED Instructor~



Green River Game Wardens Rob Shipe (left) and Justin Dodd (right) check anglers on Flaming Gorge Reservoir. (photo: top, left)

Green River Information and Education Specialist Lucy Wold puts hunter education students through the “hypothermia chamber of death” experiment (photo: left, center) Students also did an activity where they raced against each other to layer their hunting partner properly, as they learned about survival. (photo: below)



4-H kids from Camp Roberts also participated in the “hypothermia chamber of death” experiment and had to tie knots on the hitching post outside the Chow Hall. The students were from all over Wyoming and the WGFD partnered with 4-H for the three-day Adventure Camp. (photo: above)



Rock Springs resident Matt Gardner recently completed his hunter education instructor certification. We are very glad to have another fine hunter education instructor in the Green River Region. Welcome aboard Matt! (photo: above)

~Habitat Improvement Project in Wyoming Range~

Jill Randall, Pinedale Terrestrial Habitat Coordinator, shared this information about a very important habitat improvement project in the Wyoming Range that will benefit mule deer on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land. The first is completion of the prescribed fire on the west slope of Miller Mountain at the head of Dutch George Creek. "This 400 acre aspen treatment is the first aspen unit to be burned for the WY Range Mule Deer treatments that we started by slashing in 2014," said Randall. "In total there will be nearly 10,000 acres of aspen treated over the next six years. Treatments consist of a combination of mechanical slashing of conifers to create fuel conditions for a prescribed burn and cut and pile burning of aspen."

Randall said the second highlight about this project is the fact that the first sagebrush treatments we implemented in 2014 for WY Range Mule Deer were monitored this month for two year post-treatment habitat data. "Results are looking excellent," said Randall. "Leader production on sagebrush is phenomenal which means more food for wintering deer and the flush of grass and forbs is great for mule deer, sage grouse, elk, pronghorn, and livestock that use the treatment areas. There are approximately 20,000 acres of shrub treatments identified for treatments in the eight years of implementation."

"The National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) requirement was completed in spring 2014 and treatments will target winter, transitional, and summer range for mule deer in the Big Piney-LaBarge area as a result of the Wyoming Range Mule Deer Initiative," Randall said. "30,000 acres will be enhanced to improve sagebrush, mountain shrubs and aspen communities. In addition to this, approximately 2,000 acres of cheatgrass will be sprayed with herbicide annually to improve overall range conditions and ensure success of the other treatments. Funding partners include Wyoming Wildlife Natural Resource Trust, Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative, WGFD Trust, WGFD Mule Deer Initiative Funds, Wyoming Governors Big Game License Coalition, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Muley Fanatics Foundation, Mule Deer Foundation, Denbury, Exxon and BLM."



Prescribed burn at the head of Dutch George Creek

~Successful Habitat Improvement Projects~



2014 Pre-Treatment



2016 2-Yr Post Treatment



2014 Pre-Treatment



2016 2-Yr Post Treatment

~Horse Training for Game Wardens~ Something 's Fishy!~



Green River Wildlife Management Coordinator Mark Zornes, Evanston Game Warden Nick Roberts, and Kemmerer Game Warden Chris Baird conducted a horse care and familiarization training, including riding and packing, for our game warden trainees in June on the Fontenelle Face. Pictured at left are Chris, Nick, Robb Shipe and Justin Dodd.



GR Wildlife Mgt. Coordinator Mark Zornes and "Honeycomb".



Bullhead catfish

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department is asking anglers to report any bullhead catfish harvested in the UP Ice Ponds after one was caught during the Evanston Kids Fishing Day on June 25.

"Bullhead catfish do not belong in the UP Ice Ponds," said Green River Fisheries Supervisor. "This is the first and, hopefully, only record of a bullhead in the Bear drainage. We are asking anglers to please harvest and report any bullheads they might catch from the pond. Anglers may report their fish harvest to the Green River Game and Fish Region Office at: 1-800-843-8096 or contact Evanston Game Warden Nick Roberts at 307-789-3285.



Office managers Sheila Watts (left) and Regina Dickson (right) pretty much agree the word for the day is BOATS! Watercraft registration picks up considerably in June and will remain steady through August.

<http://wgfd.wyo.gov>

Office Phone: 307-875-3223

Office Fax: 307-875-3242

Toll Free In-State 1-800-843-8096

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We are on the web! <http://wgfd.wyo.gov>



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*~Critter Spotlight~
smooth green snake
By Mark Zornes a.k.a. Leopold*



- ***A small, large-eyed, non-venomous snake*** associated with mountain and mountain foothill habitats, the smooth green snake is easily identified by its brilliant green coloration, and white or very pale yellow belly. Rarely does this snake exceed 20 inches in length, the record is 26 inches.
- This snake is totally harmless and rarely bites, even when handled. This species feeds primarily on insects.
- ***Surveys for this species are difficult*** due to its cryptic (camouflaged) coloration, but the species appears to be found in limited, widely separated areas of Wyoming. Populations of this snake can be found in the southern Black Hills (where there are two subspecies; the eastern and western smooth green snake), the northern Laramie Range near and north of Laramie Peak, near Arlington, and in the Sierra Madres near Baggs. All smooth green snakes south and west of the Black Hills are of the western variety.
- ***This species is an egg layer***, laying a clutch of 6-7 eggs in the summer months. No parental care occurs following egg laying. Young are often a different and duller coloration than adults, achieving the typical brilliant green coloration following their first shedding.
- ***To the uninitiated***, this species could be confused with the much duller-colored, yellow-bellied racer in eastern Wyoming. However, this species inhabits drier, plains habitats at much lower elevations, and is much less brilliantly colored. Young racers are very heavily marked with blotches and cannot be confused with young smooth green snakes.